

ABSTRACT

1
2 A “swipe”-type magnetic stripe reader suitable as a low-cost computer peripheral
3 is described, together with distribution programs to create incentives for the wide
4 deployment of the readers. The readers are used in conjunction with methods for
5 distributing, through print media, machine readable, magnetically encoded media that
6 may be read with the readers. An optional authentication mechanism may be built into
7 the readers that can be used to control their use, based on information encoded into the
8 machine-readable media that have been distributed. The encoded authentication
9 information can, for example, be keyed to whether an advertiser has been authorized,
10 and/or based on temporal criteria, so as to provide for effective time periods for a
11 promotion.